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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATES UNAMI/MNF-I

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Security Council received a quarterly briefing on November 14 from Staffan de Mistura, head of the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), and from Ambassador Khalilzad, on behalf of MNF-I. Iraqi PR Bayati also addressed the Council. All participants, including members of the Security Council, praised the recent improvements in the security situation and the efforts of the UN, particularly with regard to election preparation, disputed internal boundaries and the humanitarian situation. Several countries - Libya, Russia and South Africa - criticized the recent raid by U.S. forces into Syria on October 26. Syria attempted to exercise a right of reply following the U.S. intervention, but its insistence on speaking instead of conveying its message via letter was not approved by Council members. END SUMMARY.

UNAMI/DE MISTURA

¶2. (U) SRSR Staffan de Mistura began by emphasizing the importance of the robust Security Council mandate that allowed UNAMI to support Iraq's national reconciliation process and provide assistance with regard to disputed internal boundaries, development strategies, election preparations, and the Neighbors Process. Next year will be the time to consolidate 2008 gains, he said, noting the "unquestionable" reduction in violence. He warned that spikes in violence may occur in the run-up to the January elections, but stressed that the GOI continues to improve its security forces, including the integration of the Awakening Councils. He also raised concerns regarding continuing political tensions, such as the recent Kurdish - Arab dispute in Khanaqin and the attacks on Mosul's Christians.

¶3. (U) De Mistura described UNAMI's role in breaking the CoR's electoral law impasse, which he called the most important piece of legislation approved during this reporting period. He was pleased to note the CoR's amendment of the law to include specific seats in the Baghdad, Ninewa and Basrah provincial councils for minorities, which would ensure Iraq's respect for minority rights. He said the elections would lead to a more inclusive sectarian balance and shift Iraq's political landscape, adding that the burden of election observation would fall to Iraqi national observers. On Kirkuk and disputed internal boundaries de Mistura cited the recent displacement of Mosul's Christians as illustrative of the complex relationship between minority rights, elections, and disputed territories. UNAMI would provide technical assistance to the recently established Kirkuk Commission, he said, in addition to the advanced analysis of the 15 "fault-lines" in northern Iraq already undertaken.

¶4. (U) In regards to Iraq's relationship with the international community, de Mistura spoke positively of greater Iraqi ownership of the International Compact for Iraq and of the Iraqi MFA's Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism. He also applauded regional engagement, such as the several high-level Arab visits to Iraq and the establishment of diplomatic missions in Baghdad. Turning to humanitarian issues, de Mistura noted that the GOI must ensure conditions are right

for IDPs and refugees to return and announced next week,s launch of a Sub-Regional 2009 humanitarian appeal. He concluded with UNAMI,s plans to open offices in Najaf, Ramadi, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basrah, and added that nine UN agencies now have permanent senior-level international presence in county.

GOI STATEMENT

15. (U) Iraq Perm Rep Bayati praised the tangible security improvements throughout Iraq due to GOI operations, citing an 89 per cent drop in violence in 2008 compared to 2007. Increases in armed forces and police numbers, as well as the transfer of security to the GOI from MNF-I in Al-Anbar, Babil and Wasit, demonstrated the GOI capacity to provide security, he said. Continuing with security gains, he cited the September 2008 return of 432 Christian families to Baghdad, the integration of the Awakening Councils and members of Saddam Hussein,s army into the security forces, and the two brigades sent to Mosul to protect Christians.

16. (U) On economic growth, Bayati said Iraq expects 8 per cent economic growth by the end of 2008. He noted that the GOI had allocated 19 billion USD to encourage increased foreign investment in Iraq. Oil production increased by 11 per cent in 2008, and the GOI had announced plans to introduce a monitoring mechanism to ensure oil revenue transparency. Bayati stressed that the GOI was keen to promote a culture of tolerance, noting the Ministry of Interior had dismissed over 27,000 employees due to human rights abuses. Finally, he highlighted GOI cooperation with neighboring countries, including recent high level visits to

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Iraq, the opening of several Arab embassies, and the arrival of an Arab League Representative. He encouraged the forgiveness of Iraq,s debt and welcomed a bilateral meeting with Kuwait to discuss the issue under the auspices of the UNCC.

COUNCIL MEMBERS REACT

17. (U) Council members all praised the recent decline in security incidents, and noted the importance of election preparation. They praised the efforts of the UN, particularly with regard to elections, disputed internal boundaries and the humanitarian situation. Croatia and the UK expressly praised the efforts of MNF-I. Libya and Panama both welcomed the decrease in violence, but called for an end to "foreign occupation." Libya, Russia and South Africa criticized the recent raid by U.S. forces into Syria on October 26. South Africa concluded its remarks by stressing that the Security Council authorized MNF-I,s mandate, and, therefore, MNF-I must operate in a manner consistent with the authority provided.

18. (SBU) Ambassador Khalilzad delivered remarks on behalf of MNF-I. His statement, which included a brief mention calling on Syria to halt the flow of terrorists and foreign fighters across the border, caused the Syrian PR to ask the Costa Rican Presidency for a right of reply. The Presidency asked that the right of reply be given in written form, as is customary in the debate format. The Syrian PR refused and insisted on speaking. The U.S. and several other Council members (including a key role played by Burkina Faso) objected privately to Syria speaking in the Council, and the session adjourned without Syria,s intervention. Khalilzad